



WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY
Christine Sinicki
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON LABOR

March 9, 2010

**Testimony on AB 752 before the Assembly Committee on Veterans
and Military Affairs:**

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members, for agreeing to hear AB 752, the Veterans Representation Bill.

Before I go into the specifics of this legislation, I'd like to explain the history behind it and how it came about. As a state representative, I've nominated several times a highly qualified Milwaukee veteran to sit on the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) board. The nomination received no response from the governor's office. I checked to see who from this area was already serving, but found no DVA board members from the greater Milwaukee area.

That led me to look at the historical makeup of the board, and I discovered a number of facts that troubled me. First of all, only one Milwaukee County veteran has been appointed to the board since 1991. Similarly, the counties of Northern Wisconsin, as defined in this map, have also had only one appointment to the board since 1991, despite having an even larger veterans population than Milwaukee County. Waukesha and Brown counties, home to the third- and fourth-largest veterans' populations in the state, have had only had one board representative each since the end of the Vietnam War. Other regions, like the Fox Valley, haven't been represented at all since the end of the Vietnam War.

State law only specifies that the seven DVA board members must have seen active duty, two in Vietnam. Though brief, the spirit of the law is important as a guide for the executive appointment power, to ensure the DVA board represents all veterans' perspectives. However, since large swaths of the state's veterans population have been underrepresented, many state veterans have started to feel disenfranchised by the DVA board. They're uneasy about its ability to represent the interests of all Wisconsin veterans, since currently four DVA board members live in Dane County, and the rest in western and northern Wisconsin.

Rep. Gottlieb and I have introduced Assembly Bill 752, requiring geographic representation on the DVA board, to bring the letter of the law more in line with the spirit of the law. State veterans groups, including the American Legion,

AMVETS, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart, among many others, strongly support this change.

The fix is simple and logical: under the Veterans Representation Bill, the state's veterans population is divided into seven districts each with a population of 65,000 veterans (+/- 4%) and requires that no more than one member of the Board of Veteran Affairs may live in any one district. The governor retains the power to appoint members, and the bill won't replace any current, confirmed board members. It also requires that the districts be redrawn every 10 years if their population has changed.

This bill also lays out a process by which the Council on Veterans' Programs may identify potential members of the Veterans Affairs Board from each district and recommend them to the governor.

All of our state's veterans deserve to know their concerns are being weighed fairly in the DVA boardroom. The Veterans Representation Bill will go a long way towards giving them that reassurance.



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CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON LABOR

Veterans Organizations Supporting the Veterans Representation Bill:

- American Legion of Wisconsin
- Army + Navy Union of the USA
- Catholic War Veterans of the USA
- Disabled American Veterans
- Jewish War Veterans of the USA
- Military Officers Association of America
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Navy Club of USA
- Polish Legion of American Vets
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- U.S. Submarine Vets of WWII
- United Women Veterans
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Veterans of WWII (AMVETS)
- Vietnam Veterans Against the War
- Wisconsin Association of Concerned Veterans Organizations
- Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans



WISCONSIN AMERICAN LEGION

5TH DISTRICT

262-796-0101

PO BOX 663, ELM GROVE, WI 53122

Charles A. Roloff, Commander

March 9, 2010

Wisconsin State Assembly Member

Re: AB-752 Geographic Representation of the Board of Veterans Affairs

The Wisconsin American Legion is divided into twelve districts. I am the 5th District Commander and as such I am on the Department Executive Committee, the governing body of the Wisconsin American Legion between annual conventions. I am representing the Department Commander today. Our support for this legislation has been published in our *Badger Legionnaire*.

While there may be groups in the Veterans Community that are ambivalent about this concept, we believe that no single county deserves to send four of the seven members to the board.

These positions are appointed by the Governor, and we have no problem with that process.

This fall we will elect a new Governor. Considering the announced candidates, the probability of the next Governor coming from Milwaukee County is quite high. It would be equally unfair to be in this room four years from now because four or five of the Board Members are from Milwaukee County.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Roloff

Charles A. Roloff, CSA

Commander

5th District, Wisconsin

The American Legion



STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

30 West Mifflin Street, P.O. Box 7843, Madison, WI 53707-7843

Council on Veterans Programs

February 25, 2010

Wisconsin State Assembly
Wisconsin State Senate

Re: AB-752 Geographic Representation of the Board of Veterans Affairs

Dear Representatives:

The Council on Veterans Programs includes 25 separate Veterans Organizations, representing Veterans from every County across the State of Wisconsin and is of Council to the Wisconsin Department of Veterans affairs and the Board of Veterans Affairs.

At the regular February 19, 2010 meeting of the Council, 21 of the member organizations were represented.

The Council voted to support to support this bill. Attached is a list of the organizations and how their representative voted.

Sincerely,

Council on Veterans Programs

Charles A. Roloff

Charles A. Roloff,
Secretary

Writer's direct line: 262-796-0101

*American Ex-POW's • American Legion • American Red Cross • AMVETS • Army-Navy Union • Catholic War Veterans
County Veterans Service Officers Association • Disabled American Veterans • Jewish War Veterans • Marine Corps League
Military Officers Association of America • Military Order of the Purple Heart • National Association for Black Veterans
Navy Clubs of the U.S.A. • Paralyzed Veterans of America • Polish Legion of American Veterans • The Retired Enlisted Association
U.S. Submarine Veterans of WWII • United Women Veterans • Veterans of Foreign Wars • Vietnam Veterans Against the War
Vietnam Veterans of America • Wisconsin Association of Concerned Veterans Organizations • Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans*



STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

30 West Mifflin Street, P.O. Box 7843, Madison, WI 53707-7843

Council on Veterans Programs

Roll Call Vote on February 19, 2010 to support AB-752

Council Member	Aye	No	Abstain	Absent
Amvets, Tim Thiers	X			
American GI Forum, George Banda		X		
American Legion, Charles Roloff	X			
American Red Cross, Max Olson	X			
Army-Navy Union, Paul Fine	X			
Catholic War Veterans, Jesse Haro	X			
County Veterans Service Office, Scott Berger			X	
Disabled American Veterans, Clarence Stoll	X			
Jewish War Veterans, Paul Weprinsky				excused
Marine Corps League, Mark Grams			X	
Military Officers Assn of America, Roger Fetterly	X			
Military of the Purple Heart, Rick Cherone				excused
Nat. Assn of Black Veterans, William Sims			X	
Navy Clubs of USA, Russ Alsteen	X			
Paralyzed Vet. Of Am., Ken Wendt	X			
Polish League of Am Vet, Jack Stone				excused
The Retired Enlisted Assn., Lenny Shier	X			
US Submarine Vet. WWII, Walter Stenavich	X			
United Women Vet., Linda Danker	X			
VFW, Steve Lawrence	X			
Viet Nam Vet of Am., John Margowski		X		
Viet Nam Vet Against the War, Mark Forman	X			
Wis Assn of Concerned Vet Org, Mike Gourlie	X			
Wis Viet Nam Vet., Bill Hustad	X			
Am. Ex POW – Vacant				
The vote total	16	2	3	

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